



Wetlands Function Assessment Project Update

A periodic bulletin on a Washington State effort to develop methods for assessing the performance of wetland functions

Draft calibrated methods ready for testing

Washington's Wetland Function Assessment Project is looking for volunteers to review draft methods and test them in the field.

As described in Update No. 3 (*Ecology Pub. No. 98-100*), project staff worked with teams of experts to prepare methods for assessing four types of wetlands. The methods apply to riverine and depression wetlands in the lowlands of western Washington.

Over the past six months, these methods have been revised and "calibrated" (*numbers were assigned to specific indicators of wetland function*) based on data collected at reference wetlands.

The calibrated methods must now be reviewed and tested to determine if they work well before they are released for general use.

Test critical to success

According to project manager Teri Granger, the test is an important reality check. "We have designed the methods to be relatively rapid and scientifically acceptable for a variety of applications. But only a field test will tell us how well they meet all our objectives," said Granger.

What will field testers do?

Volunteer testers will receive a copy of the new methods and computer spreadsheets for calculating the models that assess up to 15 functions for each wetland type.

The methods will be published in a two-volume document: Vol. 1 contains the methods and explains them; Vol. 2 describes how to collect field data.

Volunteers will be asked to fill in a detailed questionnaire that will help determine whether or not the methods are

technically acceptable, easy to apply, and useful for different applications.

When will testing begin?

The review and test phase will begin in early July. Comments and questionnaires are due by mid-October. Testers will receive detailed instructions and deadlines.

How much time does it take?

The length of time needed to collect data in the field and apply the methods will vary from a few hours to a day for each site. Complex or large sites may take more time. Also, it will take longer to apply the methods in the beginning until people become more familiar with the methods.

"For the test, we are asking most of the volunteers to visit at least one wetland of their choice," said Granger. "However, collecting data at several wetlands, some of different types, will give testers a better feel for the methods."

What expertise is needed?

The methods were designed to be applied by those with a technical background in wetlands. Expertise is needed to make accurate and consistent observations of the variables used in the methods.

Granger suggests that at a minimum, testers have the level of expertise needed to delineate wetlands.

Training in July and August

Up to 40 testers, chosen from the volunteers that sign up, will be trained. Each will apply the methods at an assigned control wetland in addition to wetlands of their own choice. The control test will determine if the method's results are reproducible.

Some untrained testers will also visit a selected control site assessed by the trained testers. This will help determine to what extent training is necessary for consistent application of the methods.

Volunteers selected for training may choose between two 3 1/2 day training workshops to be held in Olympia on July 20-23 and August 10-13. The training will include detailed instructions on data collection in the classroom and in the field, and instruction on how to calculate results.

"Office" review welcome

Granger encourages those who don't have a technical background or who can't test the methods in the field to review the draft methods. "This is a good time to introduce the methods to those who aren't technically oriented," said Granger. "We hope

The Washington State Wetland Function Assessment Project is a statewide effort to develop relatively rapid, scientifically acceptable methods of assessing how well wetlands perform functions such as improving water quality, reducing floods, and providing wildlife habitat.

Methods are being developed for different wetland types in Washington State.

The project fills a need for function assessment methods that *numerically* describe how well functions are performed and that are specifically designed for the wetlands types in the state.

The project is funded by the Environmental Protection Agency and coordinated by Ecology.

managers and decision-makers will read the introductory parts of the document that explain the methods and how the results can be used."

Granger warns that the document is not light reading. "The documents is long, in part because we included the rationale for all the indicators in each model," she said. "Also, the function models themselves are very technical. It is a lot to ask people to review and test, but we believe the final result will be worth the investment."

How to get involved

To get involved in the review and test of the draft methods, fill in the coupon below by June 26, 1998.

Public involvement and technical peer review is crucial to the success of this project. Please share this information with others that may be interested!

For more information, contact project manager Teri Granger at (360) 407-6547, FAX (360) 407-6535, e-mail tgra461@ecy.wa.gov, or visit the project web site at www.wa.gov/ecology/wfap/wfaphome.html.



I would like to review draft wetland function assessment methods

☐ I would like to **review** draft calibrated assessment methods in the office:

- ☐ Send me *Volume One* - the draft methods and introductory information.
- ☐ Also send me *Volume Two* - procedures and forms for collecting and recording data.

Name

Affiliation

☐ I want to **test** draft methods in the field:

- ☐ Please consider me a candidate for training. I will commit to visiting control site if trained.
- ☐ Don't consider me a candidate for training. However, I am willing to visit at least one control site.
- ☐ Don't consider me a candidate for training. I would like to test draft methods at wetlands of my choice.

Address

City, State

ZIP

Telephone

FAX

e-mail

Send this form to: Teri Granger, Washington Department of Ecology, PO Box 47600, Olympia, WA 98504-7600, FAX (360) 407-6535, or e-mail your request to tgra461@ecy.wa.gov with the subject line "REVIEW." Please respond by June 26, 1998.



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